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ABSTRACT

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MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION FOR THE DOMINANT CULTURE: TOWARD THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MULTICULTURAL SENSE OF SELF

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Abstract

This paper synthesizes the literature in social and multicultural education and classic work in social psychology to examine philosophical, theoretical and practical issues related to multicultural education for the dominant culture. "Multicultural self-development" is posited as an essential aspect of equity education for dominant culture students. Through the social construction of a more multifaceted "self," students can begin to critically examine personal and historical perspectives and practices underlying the opportunity gap between dominant and dominated sociocultural groups. The developmental process is examined in detail. Implications for practice address student grouping and interaction, the development of an "emotionally safe, yet intellectually sound" classroom environment, and the construction of lessons specifically designed to promote multicultural development.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION FOR THE DOMINANT CULTURE:
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> The paradox of education is precisely this--that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated. The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions, to say to himself this is black or this is white, to decide for himself whether there is a God in heaven or not. To ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions, is the way he achieves his own identity. But no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish. (James Baldwin, 1988, p. 4)

Social educators have long recognized that an "opportunity gap" separates those with sufficient political and economic means to influence their own environmental conditions from those who neither possess nor can reasonably acquire such means (Anyon, 1979; Beard & Beard, 1930; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Counts, 1932; Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970; Mann, 1957; See also Hertzberg, 1981 and Stanley, 1985). From the original European conquest of the western hemisphere (e.g., Zinn, 1980) to current forms of institutionalized discrimination, the political and economic discrepancies separating dominant and dominated sociocultural groups have been undergirded by a fundamental gap between American ideals and social actions--a gap between rhetoric and reality (Baldwin, 1963, 1988; Banks, 1987, 1989; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Faludi, 1991; Greene, 1993; Kozol, 1991; Newmann, 1975; Nieto, 1992; Philips, 1972; Ogbu, 1987; Sleeter & Grant, 1988; Zinn, 1980).2

Although the existing discrepancies have been well documented, educational efforts to narrow the opportunity gap continue to meet with frustration (Nieto, 1992; Ogbu, 1987; Sleeter & Grant, 1988). Thus, the primary focus of this paper is to examine the role of multicultural education in narrowing the opportunity gap.4 Specifically, I will synthesize the literature in multicultural and social education and classic work in social psychology (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Mead, 1934; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 1985, 1991) to address both the need for narrowing the opportunity gap and the mechanisms by which this goal can be addressed in classroom practice. First, I will more closely examine the opportunity gap and discuss the general focus of multicultural education for the dominant culture.3 Next, I will provide a theoretical framework and discuss developmental processes related to multicultural development for the dominant culture. Finally, I will conclude with a detailed discussion of implications for classroom practice.

Multicultural Education for the Dominant Culture

In spite of the long held belief that education is a viable means of narrowing the opportunity gap (e.g., "the great equalizer" proclaimed by Horace Mann), educators continue to be frustrated in their efforts to promote multicultural understanding and, through it, equal social, economic and political opportunity. At the center of the problem is a paradox: While those hurt most by the opportunity gap are often least able to influence the social conditions responsible for its existence, those with the greatest political and economic means are often least likely to do so (Anyon, 1979; Baldwin, 1988; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Nieto, 1992;

Sleeter & Grant, 1988). As Nieto (1992) writes, "(D)iscrimination always helps somebody--which partly explains why racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination continue to exist" (p. 23). The fact that recent progress has been minimal is obscured by a general perception that never before have all members of society enjoyed such equal access to the existing resources. As Sleeter and Grant (1988) demonstrate, "Business as usual" is masked by "Illusions of progress."

According to Banks (1987), the discrepancy between espoused democratic and egalitarian principles and actual social conditions exists largely because "dominant ethnic and cultural groups develop ideologies to defend their attitudes, goals, and social structures" (p. 537). Among other things, these ideologies justify existing discrepancies in the distribution of vital resources. Hence, the ideology of the dominant culture "legitimize(s) its control over the life chances of subordinate ethnocultural groups" (Bullivant, 1986, p. 103). The essential point is that the "opportunity gap" not only affects the availability of material resources, but the ideological perspectives that underlie and maintain those inequities in the first place.

The persistence of the opportunity gap, characterized by continued "linear acculturation" (Banks, 1987; Ogbu, 1987), social stratification (Anyon, 1979; Bowles & Gintis, 1976) and dominant culture resistance to critical self-reflection and modification (Baldwin, 1988, Nieto, 1992; Sleeter & Grant, 1988), has resulted in an increasing emphasis on multicultural education as an agent of change for the dominant culture. Dominant culture students who are engaged in critical, self-reflective examination of the effects of their beliefs (e.g., the American work ethic; Manifest Destiny; social Darwinism) on the diminished "life chances" (Banks, 1987; Bullivant, 1986) of dominated sociocultural groups will be better prepared to take an active and informed role in narrowing the opportunity gap (Banks, 1987, 1989; Newmann, 1975; Nieto, 1992; Sleeter & Grant, 1988).

Social Change through Self-Development

The surest way to narrow the opportunity gap is to modify the perspectives that underlie and perpetuate it. Indeed, Baldwin (1988) observed more than a quarter century ago that the identity crisis the nation was then undergoing was both inevitable and necessary. Only through such a process, he argued, can the dominant culture develop a more complete sense of its own identity necessary for the betterment of society as a whole. More recently, Nieto (1992) concurred that the self-development of dominant culture students is potentially beneficial both to the dominant culture and to society in general. Such development, Nieto argues, involves learning more about other cultures (and cultural "others"), confronting one's own racism and biases, and learning to see reality from a variety of perspectives (1992, p. 275). Nieto concludes that a central goal of multicultural education is to assist the student in the process of "becoming a multicultural person" (1992, p. 274).

The notion of becoming a "multicultural person" is particularly promising because it implies substantive self-development rather than merely learning cultural information. It implies coming to see the world, including one's own actions and sense of "self" within that world, from a variety of sociocultural perspectives. Theoretically, an individual who sees the world at least partially from the perspective of the other would find it increasingly difficult to maintain an unreflective and unyielding orientation toward the other. If this is the case, "multicultural self-development" is an essential aspect of multicultural education for the dominant culture.

Since becoming a more multicultural person involves the development of "self," the following section examines, in some detail, the nature and process of self-development. Later, these processes will be applied directly to multicultural education for the dominant culture.

Theoretical Framework: The Development of "Self"

Any theoretical perspective intended to narrow the gap between thought and action must be capable of bridging that gap, of standing simultaneously in the realms of psychological understanding and social activity. Such a tool must examine the relationships between perspective (e.g., equal opportunity for all) and action (e.g., systematic privilege and discrimination) while denying the "reality" of neither. Precisely because it defines as its basic unit of analysis the reciprocal relationship between self and society, social psychology is particularly suited to the task of bridging the gap between philosophical ideal and social action.

Reciprocity, Internalization and Symbolic Mediation

To better understand the nature and development of self, this paper draws upon three fundamental premises in social psychology: (1) social conditions and psychological selves are mutually defining, (2) the "self" is developed through a process of "internalization" (and transformation) of environmental phenomena, and (3) the mechanisms mediating internalization are symbolic in nature.

First, the basic premise of social psychology is that social conditions and individual minds and selves are fundamentally influenced each by the other (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Blumer, 1969; Hewitt, 1991; Mead, 1934). The vast majority of human interaction is at once both social and psychological, and the relationship between these aspects is reciprocal in nature. As a result, social psychologists have selected the relationship between individual thought and social life as the primary focus of study, and social interaction as a basic unit of analysis (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). The reciprocal relationship between self and society is appropriately described by Hewitt:

> Only individuals act. Everything else--society, culture, social structure, power, groups, organizations--is ultimately dependent on the acts of individuals. Yet, individuals can act only because they acquire the capacity to do so as members of a society, which is the source of their knowledge, language, skills, orientations, and motives. Individuals are born into and (influenced) by a society that already exists and that will persist long after they are dead; yet the same society owes its existence and continuity to the conduct of its members. (1991, p. 5)

Second, the self-conscious mind is developed through an ongoing process of social interaction in which individuals internalize (i.e., conceptually isolate, interpret and transform) the various physical, social and psychological phenomena within the environment (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Mead, 1934; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch & Stone, 1985; see also Piaget, 1972, for a related discussion on the process of "interiorization"). Mead (1934) and Vygotsky (1978; 1986) were concerned particularly with the internalization of social phenomena. Although Vygotsky focused largely on the role of the internalization of speech in the development of higher psychological functions (i.e., higher order thinking) and Mead concentrated on the influence of internalized social roles, relationships and perspectives on the

development of "mind" and "self," each concluded that the internalization of social phenomena yielded uniquely human forms of thinking and being.

Finally, the mechanisms that mediate internalization (and, therefore, psychological development and social change) are symbolic in nature (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Hewitt, 1991; Mead, 1934; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Blumer, 1969; Wertsch & Stone, 1985). Indeed, one of Mead's primary endeavors was "to show that mind and the self are without residue social emergents; and that language...provides the mechanism for their emergence" (Morris, in Mead, 1934, p. xiv). It is not the phenomenon itself, but the meaning or interpretation of the phenomenon that is internalized. These meanings are communicated through the use of symbol systems, or language, during the ongoing social process Blumer (1969) has labeled "symbolic interaction."

> All three aspects--mutual influence, internalization and symbolic mediation--are represented in words written by Dewey (1916) nearly a century ago: Not only is social life identical with communication, but all communication (and hence all genuine social life) is educative. To be a recipient of a communication is to have an enlarged and changed experience. One shares in what another has thought and felt and in so far, meagerly or amply, has his own attitude modified. Nor is the one who communicates left unaffected (p. 5).

The Process of "Objectification"

Mead (1934) referred to the various physical, social and psychological phenomena that can be conceptually isolated and named, and that are therefore available for internalization, as "objects." According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), once objects within the environment have been isolated and named, they can be assigned the status of "objective reality." They can come to be viewed "as if they were things, that is, in non-human or possibly suprahuman terms" (p. 89). This applies to not only to physical phenomena, but social relationships and psychological understandings as well. Thus, we apprehend "the products of human activity as if they were something else than human products--such as facts of nature, results of cosmic laws, or manifestations of divine will" (p. 89). Among these "human products," ideological beliefs and self-identity can be isolated, named and viewed as objectively real. For the purposes of this paper, the procedure by which such "objects" are conceptually isolated and come to be viewed as objectively "real" will be referred to as the process of "objectification."

The process of objectification is central to the multicultural development of self because it enables one not only to have experiences but to be conscious of those experiences, not only to be a person but to reflect upon the nature of one's personhood. Once an experience, perspective, relationship or state of existence is objectified, it can be manipulated in other ways as well. After having identified oneself as a self, for example, that individual may reflect upon and critique the nature of that self. The individual can consciously consider the kind of person one wishes to become, the kinds of physical, social and psychological actions required to become that person, and the means by which those actions might be carried out under the existing environmental circumstances. Thus, "objectification" represents an initial step in the fundamental process by which humans consciously and systematically modify not only the physical and social environment, but the very sense of "self."

Self-Development through Social Interaction

The internalization of social objects (e.g., roles, relationships, processes) is clearly present in the self-development of children. As the "child plays at being a mother, at being a teacher, at being a policeman....(t)hese are personalities which they take, roles they play, and in so far control the development of their own personality" (Mead, 1934, p. 150, 153). Having internalized the role or perspective of the other, the child perceives and acts toward the world as she believes the other typically perceives and acts toward the world. In so doing, the child comes ever closer to seeing the world through the eyes of the other. Thus, Mead asserted:

> The specifically social expressions of intelligence...depend upon the given individual's ability to take the roles of...the other individuals implicated with him in given social situations...[T]his putting of one's self in the places of others, this taking by one's self of their roles or attitudes, is not merely one of the various aspects or expressions of intelligence or of intelligent behavior, but is the very essence of its character. (1934, p. 141)

Individuals come to understand the general perspectives of others through their own limited social interactions. Based on a child's experience with relatively few other children, for example, along with stories and discussions about children and childhood, a generalized conception of the role and nature of <u>all</u> children is gradually formed. As the child continues to observe and interact with a greater variety of children, her general conception (or schema, in Piagetian terminology) of "child" is elaborated. The greater the opportunity for broad and substantive social interaction, the broader and more multifaceted will be her conception. Mead (1934) labelled such generalized conceptions about the role and nature of others the "generalized other." The broader and more diverse the social environment and the greater one's opportunity to observe and discuss roles and relationships within it, the broader and more diverse will be the generalized other.

This process applies not only to understanding the other, but to the development of "self" as well. Indeed, it is only through the eyes of others that an individual comes to see oneself as a self in the first place. As Mead (1934) noted:

> The individual experiences himself as such, not directly, but only indirectly...(H)e becomes an object to himself only by taking the [perspectives] of other individuals toward himself within a social environment or context of experience and behavior in which both he and they are involved. (p. 138).

Thus, not only is the child's general interpretation of "child" gradually elaborated through broader sociocultural experience and dialogue, but as soon as the child understands that she, too, is a member of the group she is defining (i.e., "child"), her generalized <u>self</u>-conception is elaborated as well.

Of course, self-development does not cease with childhood. As the sociocultural environment is enlarged throughout life, the self also expands and diversifies. To the extent that the individual objectifies and reflects upon these changes, self-identity is modified as well. The individual continues to become a broader, more multicultural and more self-conscious person as long as there is a continuation of the processes (e.g., increasingly diverse social experience;

symbolically mediated objectification and internalization of experience) by which the individual comes to see oneself as a "self" in the first place.

Implications for Classroom Practice

Since self-development continues during both academic and nonacademic events, implications will be examined for the construction and maintenance of the ongoing classroom environment as well as the development and implementation of lessons specifically designed to promote multicultural self-development.4

Multicultural Development within the Classroom Environment

Whenever meaningful social interaction occurs, internalization and self-development occur as well. This is equally true of interaction within the classroom environment and interaction in everyday life--outside the classroom, at home, within the community, and so forth. A significant difference between the school setting and other social settings, however, is that within the classroom teachers may structure the ongoing learning environment in such a way as to maximize existing opportunities for multicultural self-development. Student grouping, the nature and focus of student discussion, and the overall norms of classroom interaction are among the many aspects of the ongoing classroom environment upon which the teacher can exert considerable influence.

Student Grouping

Student grouping is probably the most immediate way to promote dominant culture interaction with individuals whose experiences, perspectives and life chances differ from their own. Even within ethnically homogeneous settings, students can be heterogeneously grouped by gender, economic status, popularity (an aspect of political opportunity), religious orientation, and so forth. Since there are as many alternative experiences, perspectives and relative life chances as there are classroom participants, opportunities should be provided throughout the year for substantive sociocultural interaction with the broadest possible range of students. One of the teacher's most important tasks is to identify the range of sociocultural experiences, perspectives and social conditions (along with self-conceptions, assumptions about others, and general beliefs about "progress," "success," "justice," and so forth) that exists within the classroom in order to maximize existing opportunities for cross-cultural interaction and meaningful self-examination.5

Specific aspects of student grouping (e.g., the social configuration; group size and duration) will vary according to specific developmental goals, the student population, the nature of the activity, and so on. Nonetheless, certain general group dynamics should be taken into consideration. For example, larger groups can provide exposure to a greater breadth of sociocultural experiences and perspectives necessary for the development of a broader, more multifaceted sense of self. Smaller groups, on the other hand, can be more conducive to substantive verbal participation by all the members. These factors are particularly important to multicultural development. While breadth of exposure can promote increased awareness of the vast array of perspectives and experiences within our pluralistic society, depth of interaction is essential in countering the reduction of the sociocultural other to a caricature or stereotype based on limited and cursory perceptions. Whatever decisions the teacher ultimately makes, considerable thought should be given to the numerous and complex factors related to student grouping for multicultural education.

Norms of Classroom Interaction

Although important, strategic grouping alone is not sufficient for multicultural self-development. Since internalization is mediated by symbolic interaction, physical grouping must be accompanied by opportunity for substantial interpersonal discussion. An all too common "illusion of progress" involves heterogeneous grouping that nonetheless requires students to work in silence, to limit their discussions to safe technical topics, or to perform "cooperative learning" tasks so highly structured and externally imposed as to violate the philosophical and theoretical principles they purport (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 1985; Slavin, 1987). If the dominant culture is to benefit from diverse sociocultural interaction, students must not only be heterogeneously grouped, but permitted and encouraged to talk about their personal experiences, perspectives and concerns as well.

The nature of student discussion within the classroom environment is strongly influenced by the general norms of classroom interaction (Au, 1980; Cazden, 1988; Gay, 1991; Mehan, 1979; Philips, 1972). Many classrooms, for example, impose strict rules for student participation in the classroom discourse (e.g., turn-taking; raising one's hand before speaking; restricting the noise level; deferring to the teacher's opinion and right to determine the focus and nature of conversation) (e.g., Cazden, 1988; Mehan, 1979). Other classes avoid addressing controversial issues or address them in a strongly normative manner (e.g., Banks, 1987; Bullivant, 1986; Nieto, 1992). As the focus gradually shifts from justification to implementation and maintenance, teachers and students alike come to view these rules as the normal way of interacting within the classroom.

Since norms of interaction are an inevitable aspect of stable social environments, it is essential that teachers concerned with narrowing the opportunity gap strive to establish and maintain environmental norms conducive to multicultural self-development. An environment conducive to multicultural self-development, it seems, should be both emotionally safe and intellectually sound. In a safe classroom environment, students are not afraid to risk asking questions that might be perceived as "stupid" or to discuss experiences or personal perspectives that differ from those of their peers or teacher. In such an environment, the individuality of the student is "affirmed" (Nieto, 1992), and sociocultural pluralism is recognized as necessary and valuable within a democratic society. A safe environment is particularly important if members of dominated cultures are to risk sharing their own perspectives--the perspectives of greatest value for the multicultural self-development of the dominant culture. And a norm of safety is equally important if dominant culture students are to reveal and grapple with the personal contradictions that have led to defensiveness, denial and increasing resistance within the dominant culture at large (Gates, 1993; Faludi, 1991).

An intellectually sound environment, on the other hand, is one in which publicly shared experiences and perspectives are carefully examined. Not every perspective is equally sound, nor is every action equally justifiable when measured against the common good. While the basic value of sociocultural diversity and the democratic right to express individual uniqueness are upheld, students within an intellectually sound environment understand that the full benefit of sociocultural interaction can only be realized when shared experiences and perspectives are subjected to careful examination.

Thus, within an intellectually sound environment it is normal not only to address difficult issues, but to weigh initial assertions against contradictory evidence and to move beyond mere description (e.g., "whats") in search of deeper explanation (e.g., "whys") and potential solutions (e.g., "hows"). Such a norm

examines not only underlying assumptions, but the motivations that underlie human activity as well. Finally, an intellectually sound environment views as normal a balance between critical examination of the actions of others and critical reflection upon one's own beliefs, actions and motivations.

Emotional safety and intellectual soundness are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, it can be argued that ultimate emotional safety requires a level of intellectual honesty, and that intellectual (and moral) soundness cannot exist without the confidence provided by a measure of emotional security (e.g., Maslow, 1968). It is entirely possible to address difficult issues while simultaneously stressing the basic value of diversity and the democratic rights of individuals to have and express opinions that differ from the majority. A society already rife with illusions of progress can ill afford to perpetuate the withholding of authentic perspectives within the classroom. On the other hand, uncritical affirmation of each and every perspective that might be shared creates a detrimental illusion of another sort. Hence, diverse perspectives must be openly expressed and carefully examined within the context of a safe, yet intellectually sound classroom environment.

Student grouping and general norms of classroom interaction are just a two of the numerous aspects that influence multicultural development within the ongoing classroom environment. Since the factors that influence the ever-changing nature of the classroom environment are numerous and context specific, the teacher alone must ultimately select the environmental norms most conducive to multicultural self development within her particular setting. However, these decisions should be informed by serious attention to broadly applicable factors such as the basic value of heterogeneous grouping, the impact of group size on exposure and level of participation, and the fundamental need for an emotionally safe yet intellectually sound norm of classroom interaction.

Academic Lessons for Multicultural Self-Development

Continued multicultural self-development requires the internalization of socioculturally diverse perspectives within increasingly broad social and historical contexts. This is particularly important in ethnically and economically homogeneous school settings where opportunities for first-hand interaction in these important areas are limited. Although the importance of ongoing sociocultural interaction within the existing environment cannot be overestimated, specific lessons designed to extend multicultural self development are important as well.

Experience and Discussion

Psychological development involves the internalization of experience, and objectification provides the conceptual access necessary to critique, respond to, and otherwise act upon that experience. Therefore, any lesson intended to promote significant multicultural development should include some form of sociocultural experience as well as explicit identification and discussion of that experience. Fortunately, many such lessons can be readily integrated into existing curricula across grade levels and subject areas. For example, Dr. Seuss' (1961) Sneetches could be used in the early grades to combine literacy education, social studies and multicultural development.

Sneetches is a story about two groups of creatures who appear identical in almost every way. However, a single physical characteristic that distinguishes one group from the other is cultivated by the dominant group as a symbol of its presumed superiority. The desire of the dominated group to gain equal status is so great that it is ultimately willing to alter its very appearance. Once this is accomplished, however, the dominant group simply changes the rules of the game so as

to maintain its advantage. The ongoing adjustments and feelings of inferiority are fueled by an unscrupulous businessman who profits greatly from the entire affair and then gets out of town when there is no more money to be made.

Sneetches clearly oversimplifies a number of important issues, and it is strongly normative in nature. Nonetheless, literature such as this provides a vivid experience that can be useful in helping young children begin to discuss the very real social conditions and relationships that surround them. Systematic sociocultural discrimination and the economics of cultural assimilation are just two of the many possible examples. Beginning with current concerns and local conditions, for example, teachers might use Sneetches as a way to initiate student examination of the ways in which television advertisers profit by promoting social norms and gender stereotypes (e.g., thin is in, boys are tough, girls are feminine) and then providing the products necessary to fulfill those images (e.g., diet plans, toy guns, dolls, makeup).

Although children's literature can provide useful experiences upon which to construct lessons, multicultural development can be promoted in other ways as well. For example, upper grades science projects on chemical development and nuclear technology might include critical examination of who benefits most from these commodities, who is harmed, and who defines "beneficial" in the first place. Similarly, social studies lessons related to particular geographical locations, economic and political systems, and historical events can be enriched through comparison, in each instance, of the varying sociocultural perspectives (e.g., on the European "discovery" of America), differential life chances (e.g., between the indigenous peoples and the "explorers"), and so forth. Finally, existing social and community resources can also be utilized. "Cultural plunges" (i.e., experiences in which students immerse themselves for short periods of time in cultural settings they would not normally encounter) can provide the experiential basis for powerful multicultural lessons.6 In each case, assessment of relative life chances is at least as important as focusing on cultural contributions or life styles, and in each instance it is essential that initial experience be accompanied by substantive discussion about that experience.

Aspects of Discussion

Lessons for multicultural development clearly resist standardization. Nonetheless, certain aspects such as experience and discussion have already been identified as essential to the promotion of multicultural self-development. A case can also be made that discussion itself should consist of at least three interrelated aspects, including initial objectification of the salient aspect(s) of the sociocultural experience, application of those aspects to a broader social and historical range of circumstances, and explicit attention to the implications for personal thought and action.

Consider the usefulness of Myers (1988) Scorpions in promoting upper grades literacy education while simultaneously encouraging dominant culture self-development. Scorpions is a fascinating fictional account of an African American youth named Jamal who, in spite of his intense desire and considerable efforts to gain an academic education and to move out of Harlem, is nonetheless unable to overcome the broader societal conditions that constrain first his economic options, and finally his dreams.

Scorpions challenges virtually every myth constructed by the dominant culture that blames the victims of society for their enduring circumstances (see Ryan, 1971, for an extensive discussion on the phenomenon of "blaming the victim"). The single

parent family cannot be blamed: Jamal's mother is loving, hard working and religious, and Jamal and his younger sister share a healthy sibling relationship. Lack of motivation cannot be blamed either, for both Jamal and his mother continually strive to overcome the various difficulties they encounter. Nor can a lack of personal responsibility be attributed to Jamal's problems. Jamal's mother is constantly weary from her efforts to provide for her family's financial and emotional needs, and Jamal himself takes on a part-time job to help pay for the economic expenses. Finally, even the "African American males" in Jamal's life cannot be blamed for his family's circumstance: In the end it becomes clear that the same conditions to which Jamal ultimately succumbs have existed for his older brother and his father, and for generations before them.

Thus, Myers weaves into a compelling novel the underlying messages that: (1) for many members of society, the existing social conditions are virtually insurmountable, (2) these conditions are largely the result of dominant culture ideology and action, (3) dominant culture complicity is as much a result of inactivity (e.g., "benign neglect") as it is the result of aggressive acts of oppression, and (4) unless the dominant culture is actively and consciously part of the solution, it is inevitably part of the problem. With even minimal examination of the root causes for Jamal's social condition, it would be difficult indeed for dominant culture readers not to recognize their own actions and perspectives.

Objectification & Reflection

Although reading a story such as Scorpions can be invaluable, having the experience is only the initial phase of the lesson. Partly because such experiences are rich and compelling, and partly because they can be threatening, it is possible for dominant culture participants to miss or avoid the underlying messages. Hence, the experience itself must be followed by explicit objectification and reflection upon the salient aspects of that experience. After reading Scorpions, for example, the teacher might ask her students to focus explicitly upon the economic aspects of Jamal's circumstance. Students might consider the reasons why Jamal's obviously hard working mother could not earn an adequate income to meet her family's modest economic needs. The students might also be encouraged to measure the cost of living within urban areas against current minimum wage levels or to examine the underlying motivations and differential affects (e.g., on varying sociocultural groups) of increasingly frequent legislative measures aimed at "preserving farmland" outlying our nation's major metropolitan areas.

Finally, whatever the experience, students should be encouraged not only to objectify the salient sociocultural aspects but to reflect upon and discuss their personal interpretations (e.g., thoughts and feelings) as well. In this way, teachers can more fully appreciate their students' sociocultural perspectives and more accurately identify their developmental needs, and students can more fully benefit from the classroom interaction.

Social and Historical Application

Objectifying and reflecting upon the salient aspects of a sociocultural experience are essential to any discussion intended to promote multicultural development. However, objectification represents merely the beginning of numerous dialogical possibilities that may follow. Once a particular aspect of the experience has been identified, various social and historical instances, or applications, can be examined. For example, the teacher might continue the lesson from Scorpions by helping her students understand that the conditions experienced by Jamal represent but a single instance in a vast array of economic inequities that

have existed across social contexts and geographical locations and throughout history.

Such applications are necessary to help students understand the interconnectedness and pervasiveness of the social conditions that characterize the opportunity gap and the dominant perspectives that support it. Without broad social and historical awareness, it is too easy to shift the "blame" to particular geographical locations (e.g., the "inner city"), cultural groups ("single parent families," "African American males"), or historical periods (e.g., "slavery was terrible, but it ended over 100 years ago"), rather than to seriously contemplate one's own potential involvement.

Implications for the Development of "Self"

Ultimately, the teacher must help dominant culture students examine their personal (albeit perhaps passive or implicit) roles in perpetuating the opportunity gap and the implications of this realization for the development of their own perspectives and practices. To realize the full developmental potential of the sociocultural experience, discussion must at some point require dominant culture students to address the relationship between the life chances of the sociocultural other and their own beliefs, activities and superior life chances.

Optimum multicultural development requires dominant culture students to recognize that unless they are consciously and actively part of the solution, they are inevitably part of the problem. It does little good for students to acknowledge the complicity of dominant culture ideology in maintaining the opportunity gap if they do not also recognize their own role in perpetuating that ideology or the potential of self-modification to help narrow the gap.

Because humans are capable of objectifying not only the external environment but personal existence as well, it is possible to make oneself the explicit object of consideration. That is, it is possible for students to explicitly contemplate the person they see themselves as being, the person they wish to become, and the actions required to become that person. Since self-contemplation from the perspective of the other is central to the process of multicultural self-development, dominant culture students might be encouraged to ask themselves, "How might I be viewed from the perspectives of Jamal and his mother and his brother in prison?" "In what ways might they be right?" "And what are the implications for who I am, for what I believe, and for who I wish to become?" Continued multicultural development for the dominant culture requires ever-widening self-reflection not only from the perspectives of fictional characters, but from the very real perspectives of the countless others whose life chances have been systematically reduced in order to maintain and enhance the opportunity gap.

Although lessons for multicultural development resist standardization, the aspects of experience and discussion, including objectification, application and implications for self-development, are indispensable. Multicultural development can be significantly enhanced as the focus gradually shifts from the experience itself to the salient aspects of that experience, to multiple instances and applications throughout society, and finally to the implications for personal self-development.

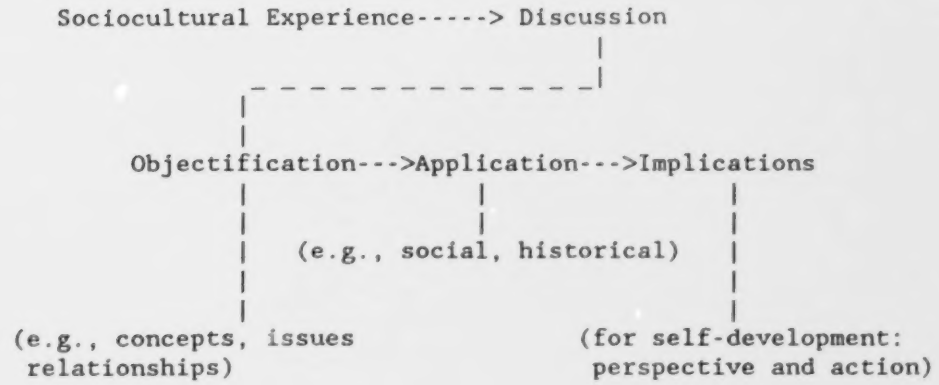

Figure 1. Essential aspects of a lesson for multicultural self-development.

Summary and Conclusion

The opportunity gap that has historically separated sociocultural groups continues today. Partially as a result of this persistence, multicultural education has increasingly focused on the need for dominant culture students to consider their own roles in the perpetuation, and potential narrowing, of the opportunity gap. Such a focus examines difficult issues such as the life chances of dominated sociocultural groups relative to the life chances of those who dominate them. Through critical examination of one's own thoughts and actions and state of being, dominant culture students can develop a more multicultural sense of "self."

Perhaps the most important implication of the work in social psychology for "multicultural self-development" is that the particular nature of classroom experiences and discussions is vital. This is equally true of interactional opportunities and norms within the ongoing classroom environment as it is lessons specifically designed to promote multicultural development.

The broader the sociocultural environment and the more carefully examined the experiences and perspectives shared within that environment, the better equipped dominant culture students will be to understand our pluralistic society, including themselves. To help promote broad classroom participation that is nonetheless accessible to critical examination, it is important to create an emotionally safe, yet intellectually sound norm of classroom interaction.

Because classroom settings and individual needs are context specific, optimum lessons resist standardization. Nonetheless, certain essential aspects for multicultural self-development can be identified. Since psychological development involves not only the having of experience but the objectification and discussion of that experience as well, lessons designed to promote multicultural self-development should include both. Specifically, teachers should encourage students to objectify and reflect upon the salient aspects of the sociocultural experience, discuss various social and historical applications, and honestly examine the implications for personal thought and action.

In providing opportunities for dominant culture students to recognize and confront their own implication in maintaining the opportunity gap, both the dominant culture and society in general will be served. The dominant culture will benefit by coming to more fully know itself, and society will benefit as those with the

greatest means find it increasingly difficult to maintain the perspectives and actions that perpetuate the opportunity gap. Although progress is indeed slow, the likelihood of progress can be increased when the dominant culture begins to see itself first as part of the problem, and then as a legitimate part of the solution. Upon glimpsing one's own "self" within Pandora's box, even shutting the lid cannot erase its contents from memory.

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Endnotes

1. The terms "dominant culture" and "dominated cultures" are used by Nieto (1992) to distinguish the European American "mainstream" and sociocultural groups that have been systematically dominated by the ideologies and actions of that mainstream. It should be noted that there is no clear demarkation between dominant and dominated cultures, however. To some degree, "dominance" is relative and context specific.

2. In this paper, "culture" is used broadly to include ethnicity, gender, social roles, class distinctions, and so forth. The term "sociocultural" is also used to indicate this inclusive orientation toward "culture."

3. The explicit focus of this paper is not intended to suggest that multicultural education for the dominant culture is distinct from multicultural education in general. Nor do I wish to imply that the dominant culture is the only group in need of an increased orientation toward social justice and "community," or that the sole focus of multicultural education should be on social inequities rather than the centrality of sociocultural pluralism in the shaping of our nation. Rather, my argument is simply intended to provide a mechanism for the implementation of one essential aspect of multicultural education. The theoretical principles and approaches I describe are applicable to multicultural education in general.

4. In this conception, "lessons" are not restricted to a single setting or even a single day.

5. The literature on the "teacher as researcher" indicates a means by which such information can be gained during ongoing practice. For philosophical arguments, see Houser, 1990. For case studies and methodological information, see Goswami & Stillman, 1987.

6. The classic example of the cultural plunge is John Howard Griffin's (1960) Black Like Me.